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Parent's home backs bond to release CIA spy suspect

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A former woman CIA clerk charged with passing government secrets to her lover while stationed in Ghana was freed yesterday on a \$25,000 bond that was secured by a deed to her parents' Virginia home.

Sharon M. Scranage, 29, who faces up to life in prisonment if convicted of espionage, held a cheerful reunion with her family and friends when her detention hearing ended in the U.S. magistrates' courtroom in Alexandria.

During the long hearing Ms. Scranage sat expressionless, keeping her eyes straight ahead in the small courtroom.

When U.S. Magistrate W. Harris Grimsley ended the court recess he directed her father, a retired heating mechanic at the U.S. Marine base in Quantico, to supervise Ms. Scranage during the bond period and to report any violation of the terms to him immediately.

Ms. Scranage is not to leave the

area near her home and the Washington area without court permission, and if she fails to appear for trial or any hearing the government will sell the house and also possibly charge her with jumping bail, subject to a possible fine of \$25,000, a 10-year prison term or both.

Asked if she understood, Ms. Scranage said, "Yes, sir."

As soon as defense attorney Brian Gettings, and a court matron took off her plastic handcuffs, Ms. Scranage, rushed into the arms of her brother, her sister, Arzella, her parents, her friend and several family friends. They all wept.

Mr. Grimsley accepted a deed to the family home in King George, which has an estimated commercial value of \$100,000, as security for the \$25,000 bond so the family did not have to put up cash. He placed her in the custody of her parents, Perry Lee and Mary Belle Scranage.

Ms. Scranage was arrested July 11 on charges of revealing the identities of CIA undercover agents and of Ghanaian intelligence sources to

the government of that West African nation by passing classified information to her lover, Michael Agbotui Soussoudis, 39, who also has been arrested in Virginia on espionage charges.

U.S. intelligence sources have said that more than one of the CIA's secret Ghanaian contacts have been killed by their government since their names were revealed, and other government sources have said the spying operation caused damage to the United States by weakening the credibility of CIA intelligence operations.

But Ms. Scranage's brother, Perry Lee Scranage, told reporters during a court recess: "We are not going to forsake her. We are a family."

Asked if he believes his sister was innocent despite her detailed confession to FBI agents, her brother said, "I believe that she is."

But Mr. Scranage added, "We are still proud to be Americans."

"What we're going to do is put our arms around her and love her," he said. "We love her. She was a great person. She still is."